

**State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**



**COMMISSION ON CHILDREN
The New Face of Child Poverty in Connecticut**

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In 2003, 88,600 Connecticut children lived in poverty.

About one-quarter (24%) of Connecticut children – and 26% of children under age 6 – live in low-income families below 200% of the federal poverty level (2000-2002 average).

In the 2000 Census, 25% (more than 200,000) of Connecticut's children did not have a full-time, year-round employed parent; Connecticut ranked 25th in the nation on this measure.

By the time they begin formal schooling, children in low-income families already lag significantly behind their more affluent peers academically, socially and physically.

14% of low-income children in Connecticut lack health insurance.

Each year that a child spends in poverty results in a cost of \$11,800 in lost future productivity.

The Connecticut labor force is projected to lose as much as \$1.1 billion in future productive capacity for every year that the current number of Connecticut children live in poverty.

Children in poverty are more likely to have:

- poor health
- infectious disease
- low birthweight
- asthma
- anemia
- obesity
- lead poisoning
- growth stunting
- death during childhood
- missed immunizations
- hunger/food insecurity

Poor children are at increased risk of stunted growth, anemia, asthma, obesity and poor cognitive development. They are two to three times more likely to have delayed immunizations, to contract bacterial meningitis, and to be lead poisoned.

Children in poverty are up to three times more likely to die during childhood.

Children growing up poor in Connecticut perform on educational tests at a much lower level than do higher-income children. The 2003 Nation's Report Card indicates that Connecticut has some of the largest achievement gaps in the nation between students from low- and high-income families.

While 38 towns had child poverty rates of less than 2% in the 2000 Census, seven towns had a rate above 23%, led by Hartford at 41% and New Haven at 33%.

Latino children in Connecticut are seven times more likely to live in poverty than white, non-Hispanic youth. African-American children are six times more likely to live in poverty.

Nearly one in five of Connecticut's female workers earn wages below the poverty level, as do one in four Latino and African-American workers.

A parent who has a full-time job and makes the minimum wage earns well below the poverty line (\$18,400/year for a family of 4 in 2003). In 2003, despite working full-time, full-year, 9% of Connecticut workers (105,000) earned less than \$20,000 annually, and more than a quarter of a million workers earned less than \$30,000 annually.

In greater Hartford, 100,000 people receive food from food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters, and 40,000 of them are children.

Nearly one in four (22.5%) of Connecticut households are “asset poor”. That is, their net worth is insufficient to support the household for more than three months if family income is interrupted.

Child care is not affordable or accessible for many families. In early 2004, the average cost to parents of a four year old enrolled in a Connecticut child care center was \$8,240.

For Connecticut families trying to move from welfare to economic self-sufficiency, the absence of a two-parent household limits their income and support. Nearly one quarter (24%) of Connecticut children live with a single parent.

The United States labor force could lose as much as \$130 billion in future productive capacity for every year that 14.5 million American children live in poverty.

Low birth weight children in their first year result nationally in a \$4 billion annual cost.

As a consequence of 500,000 children nationally not having high-quality preschool or any preschool at all, an estimated \$63 billion is lost each year in social benefits, including lower criminal justice costs and higher job incomes.

Over \$60 billion nationally is lost in productivity each year by American businesses due to employees’ lack of basic skills.

In a survey of Connecticut’s kindergarten teachers in low-income school districts, 65% of the teachers identified specific health problems among children entering kindergarten – including asthma, skin rashes, ringworm and lack of physical exams.

In a survey of kindergarten teachers in low-income school districts in Connecticut:

- 75% of children who did not attend preschool arrived at kindergarten lacking basic language and literacy skills such as being able to use complete sentences, to respond when spoken to, to identify their name in print, or to recognize the first ten letters of the alphabet; and
- 70% of children who did not attend preschool were unable to perform basic math tasks such as recognizing numbers, counting to ten or drawing basic shapes.

Children who experience quality early education have fewer retentions, more frequent attendance, and higher reading scores throughout grades K-2. In the Bridgeport study, retentions in K-2 cost 5.5 times more for those children who did not have quality early care and education (\$622,644) than for those who did (\$113,208).

In 2003, the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Connecticut was \$936 per month, or 82% of the average monthly income for a worker earning the state minimum wage of \$7.10 per hour.

From 1999 to 2003, requests from Connecticut families for homeless shelter increased by 248%.

The average annual cost to care for one youth at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) is officially \$282,000 (\$774 per day); an unofficial estimate sets the cost at approximately \$514,000. In contrast, the University of Connecticut undergraduate tuition, fees, room and board for the 2003-2004 school year total \$13,710 for in-state students at the Storrs campus.